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**Commission on Sustainable Development**
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**Thematic cluster for the implementation cycle 2004-2005**

## Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development

### Geneva, 15-16 January 2004

**Summary of the Chairperson****

## I. Overview

1. In preparation for the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the members of the Economic Commission for Europe met at Geneva to assess the region's progress in implementing sustainable development commitments, with particular focus on human settlements, water and sanitation. The Forum also considered interlinkages between these three themes, cross-cutting issues relating to them, and the role of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region in the global context.

2. The ECE region contains great disparity. However, within the region are four of the world's five strongest economies, which makes it better able than others to tackle implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Yet the same obstacles and challenges reported from other regions are also to be found within the ECE region.

3. Within the region, 120 million citizens lack access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Of the total European population, 31 per cent live in areas of high water stress, where overexploitation of resources is causing serious environmental problems. Infrastructure breakdown and lack of investment means that much water is lost through leakage. In Central and Eastern Europe, for example,

* E/CN.17/2004/1.

** The report of the meeting was issued as a document of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/AC.25/2004/2).

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almost half of the water leaving purification plants is lost; in some countries fewer people have access to safe water than 10 years ago; cross-contamination from leaking sewage infrastructure fosters disease; and in many areas there is a lack of capacity to tackle these obstacles.

4. The Implementation Forum heard some blunt and honest assessments of obstacles and challenges, as well as accounts of steps taken to address them.

5. The aim of the Forum, however, is not just to provide honest monitoring and assessment, although this must be the first step. Its purpose is, through sharing experience both of our successes and, especially of our mistakes, to promote implementation of the changes required to reach the goals set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

6. The assessment of the ECE region shows that it is not yet on track to reach those goals, but also shows that it could get on track. At the global level, access to clean water must be expanded at a rate of 300,000 people per day to meet the 2015 target. In the 1980's this was achieved, although not sustainably, falling in the 1990s. Implementation is challenging, but it is achievable, and the ECE region can and is helping to meet those goals both within the region and globally.

7. The present summary was produced in consultation with the Vice-Chairs of the Forum with a wide range of inputs from the diverse membership and stakeholders of the Economic Commission for Europe, including:

- Interventions from participants during the Forum itself
- Written submissions from member States
- Presentations on each theme from Forum panellists
- Papers from the ECE secretariat on each theme.

8. These inputs have been condensed in the present report, which sets out progress, obstacles and challenges as well as examples of good practice that member States have used to tackle them.

# II. Key points

## A. Human settlements

9. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation reaffirmed the target, set forth in the Millennium Development Goals of achieving, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. In assessing progress inside the Economic Commission for Europe region, the main focus was on sustainable urban development, which involves both creating the right conditions for the prosperous to live more sustainably and tackling the problem of slums.

### Assessment of progress

10. In the ECE region, 75 per cent of the population is concentrated in urban areas. Countries and municipalities have, to different degrees, addressed sustainability goals in human settlements through planning and partnerships to achieve productive, socially inclusive and environmentally sound cities.

11. The compact city paradigm has influenced integrated urban, transport and land-use planning in cities such as Copenhagen, Stuttgart and Seattle.

12. Rapid urbanization has put considerable pressure on existing transport infrastructure and municipal services, particularly in countries with economies in transition, which have the least funds available to maintain or improve them.

13. Many countries with economies in transition have carried out large-scale land privatization with varying degrees of success, partly as a result of inadequate institutional capacity. This has been accompanied by the loss of agricultural land in the urban periphery and the growth of illegal settlements with limited access to public services, including education and health.

14. The decentralization of services in such countries has led, in many cases, to municipalities receiving new responsibilities for providing essential public services, including water, sanitation, waste and transport, without the resources to carry them out.

15. In the ECE region, 100 million people are classified as poor, with 39 million living below the poverty level in North America. The difference in per capita income between the poorest and most affluent country is 1 to 45. Last year, 3 million people were recorded as homeless in both the European Union (EU) and the United States of America, and 56 million citizens in the European Union were listed as living at risk of poverty.

16. Countries in the ECE region with traditional market economies have experienced strong growth and made major progress in their structural reform agenda in the past decade.

17. Most countries have discontinued the provision of new social housing. The evidence suggests that Governments have failed to integrate social housing reforms into the wider process of welfare restructuring. Housing rehabilitation is also a pressing issue, with considerable neglect in the maintenance of ageing private and public housing, especially in countries with economies in transition.

18. While most countries are committed to waste minimization and effective waste management, prioritizing recycling, the scale of waste generation presents a major problem, particularly as landfill sites consume a disproportionate share of land. Incineration/combined heat and power (CHP) and waste-water treatment, which would do much to improve conditions require major investment.

19. Air pollution from transport has been reduced in Western Europe and North America, but is still a serious problem. Congestion has increased, particularly in large urban areas, leading to increased pollution during peak hours. In countries with economies in transition, pollution from mobile sources has increased disproportionately.

20. The world is not yet on track to meet the slum dwellers target, with the *Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, published by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat), making it clear that the number of slum dwellers worldwide is actually projected to rise if no serious action is taken.

**Obstacles and challenges**

21. Social exclusion and economic deprivation can result from: social housing reforms that have been poorly integrated with wider welfare-state restructuring; the increasing gap between income and prices, particularly in high-growth areas where market-based housing is less affordable; and ill-targeted subsidies that fail to reach the poor.

22. Growing poverty in East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries has prevented price adjustments, which would help to achieve cost recovery and much needed revenue for public services.

23. Providing infrastructure and services for ageing populations is becoming an increasing challenge in developed countries.

24. Poor local environmental quality, such as "flytipping", the unauthorized dumping of waste, graffiti, poor access to green space, and air and noise pollution, can be deciding factors in the decline of neighbourhoods.

25. Poverty, the growing numbers of refugees and flows of migration, both environmental and economic, have created pressure on housing and basic service provision, leading to social exclusion and illegal settlements.

26. Cities also face significant fiscal and technical constraints. Local authorities are dependent on national Governments for funding, and in some countries a finance gap exists because Governments have withdrawn investment and subsidies. Private developers continue to face financial difficulties, high inflation and lack of adequate credit supply.

27. Ineffective bureaucratic planning procedures, lack of transparency and inadequate institutional capacity have often led to ad hoc changes to older plans in response to development pressure. Maintenance and management of housing stock is limited by lack of institutional capacity for upgrading common structures in apartment buildings. Excessive regulation of the rental market has contributed to a shortfall in affordable housing. In addition, the demand for new housing can lead to inappropriate development on natural flood plains.

28. Inside the region and globally, access to land and credit for the poor continues to be a major constraint leading to multiple disadvantages, in particular for women. The urban poor are especially vulnerable to social exclusion since they lack access to services, safety nets and political representation.

**Good practice**

29. At all levels integrated urban planning is essential. Good practice incorporates: economic regeneration to create employment opportunities; recycling of brownfield sites; and improvement of the social infrastructure, including mixed housing, education, health, integrated public transport and sustainable energy, water, sanitation and waste services. This can help achieve more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Urban planning needs to address linkages between urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

30. Modern building design, construction and maintenance, including district heating systems and improved thermal quality/efficiency of housing stock, can address both fuel poverty and impacts on climate.

31. Genuine, rather than token, public consultation pays dividends, and should include gender perspectives on the urban environment.

32. The private sector is often better placed to build and develop infrastructure, while public sector capacity should be robust enough to set and manage institutional frameworks efficiently and accountably. Management of privatized multifamily housing can be improved by introducing and enforcing laws to regulate the operation of homeowners associations. Good land administration is central to the competitiveness of real estate and housing markets.

33. Diversity of housing stock, the provision of affordable housing for the vulnerable, equitable access to essential services and security of land tenure can help address economic and social exclusion.

34. Financing can be mobilized by: underwriting private sector risks; creating frameworks to mobilize domestic capital, including providing access to credit for home buyers; and providing an enabling institutional environment to attract domestic and foreign private sector investment. Financing for urban renewal requires sustained, long-term provision — regeneration works best when measures are significant, and comprehensive rather than piecemeal.

35. Sustainable service provision has been facilitated by competitive and decentralized approaches, community-based initiatives and public-private partnerships.

## B. Water and sanitation

36. The focus of the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Commission must be on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and the target set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by the same date. The key intermediate target is to prepare integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005.

### Assessment of progress

37. While significant progress has been made in management of water resources and quality across the region, an estimated 120 million people (1 in 7) still do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Approximately, 10 per cent of citizens in the European Union countries are potentially exposed to microbiological and other contaminants, including pesticides and heavy metals, which exceed maximum allowable concentrations. The situation is significantly worse in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries and in Central Europe.

38. Most countries are well advanced in implementing comprehensive frameworks for integrated water resource management (for example under the European Union Water Framework Directive) although more needs to be done, particularly in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries.

39. Thirty-one per cent of Europe's population is concentrated in countries that experience high water stress, mainly in the Mediterranean area. Overexploitation of resources for drinking water and irrigation, particularly in Central Asia, is having

serious environmental consequences. In Central and Eastern Europe, almost half the drinking water that leaves water purification plants is lost in the pipeline system.

40. Floods are an increasing problem, particularly in Mediterranean countries, as well as in parts of Western and Central Europe and North America.

41. In the case of the five countries of the region that receive 75 per cent of their water supply from upstream countries, reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters is a major challenge. ECE Governments have managed to put in place a unique regional environmental framework to address the most important issues of transboundary cooperation, including water, industrial accidents, environmental impact assessment, public information in decision-making and access to justice.

42. Most countries have embedded the polluter-pays and user-pays principles in legislation, but reforms are not complete in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, and laws are not always effectively enforced due to limited regulatory capacity.

43. In the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters are often polluted, in particular in localized hot spots downstream of cities, industrialized and agricultural areas and mining regions. Oil pollution is a major problem in the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and in the Mediterranean.

44. Treatment of waste water from industrial and household sources has improved markedly during the past decades, but in some parts of Eastern, Central, South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasian and Central Asian countries, the proportion of waste water being treated is still low, with decaying sewage pipes causing cross-contamination of drinking water.

45. Water-related diseases are of concern, particularly in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, generally among vulnerable groups such as the young and the elderly.

46. Nitrate levels are higher in established member States of the European Union than the accession countries owing to more intensive agricultural production. Most countries in Western Europe have embarked on agri-environmental programmes to minimize the pollution of natural waters from diffuse sources. But more efficient progress can be obtained through cutting agricultural production subsidies, subject to the consideration of related social costs.

47. The European Union and the Central Asian countries have paid increasing attention to management technologies to conserve water in agriculture. Amended legislation in some East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries has introduced programmes to encourage the setting-up and capacity-building of irrigation user groups.

48. Compared with other regions, many ECE countries seem well advanced in the introduction of water-related economic instruments. Industrial water use has also been improved through regulation and voluntary approaches, including environmental management schemes such as the ISO 14000 series.

49. Much new legislation in the region, for example in the United States and Canada, has incorporated "good practice" models, with guidelines for municipalities, households and industries on water efficiency and savings.

50. Data monitoring and provision of information to the public is comparatively good, but needs to be improved, particularly in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries.

51. The Economic Commission for Europe has initiated studies on progress in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries towards the 2005 integrated water resource management and water efficiency target, and on the cost for these countries of achieving the drinking water and sanitation targets. These studies are due to be completed next month and will be presented to the twelfth session of the Commission.

**Obstacles and challenges**

52. Providing, maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure needed to purify and supply safe drinking water, in line with applicable provisions of the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Union and the Economic Commission for Europe, will put high demands on institutional capacity and financing, while even more costly investment will be needed to dispose of and treat waste water.

53. Poor understanding of social and economic links results in low political prioritization centrally, a problem compounded by poorly funded local authorities with limited fiscal powers. Unmitigated cost recovery can impact heavily on the ability of the most vulnerable to access services. In addition, high investment risk can lead to private sector disengagement.

54. Inadequate institutional, regulatory and enforcement capacity hampers effective, equitable and resource-efficient service delivery and water resources management, leading to overexploitation and pollution. Weak local and stakeholder involvement means that essential needs, knowledge and problems can be ignored.

55. Poor management of competing sectoral needs of industry, agriculture and the population at large, may result in an imbalanced provision among the range of users, while poor transboundary arrangements may prevent proper management of transboundary impacts.

56. Lack of meaningful data impairs informed decision-making. Information on groundwater is particularly scarce. Low individual awareness contributes to wasteful water use, poor hygiene and health problems.

**Good practice**

57. Developing and implementing integrated water resource management plans, which might include national and local objectives and targets, is an essential first step to meeting longer-term goals on water and sanitation.

58. Such plans need to take into account: different sectoral needs; urban, peri-urban and rural inter-linkages; the importance of protecting and managing the water-related ecosystems that capture, filter, store and release water; and, increasingly, flood plain management, including modelling the effects of climate change. Integrated water management and sanitation schemes have proven effective.

59. Water resources are best managed based on hydrographic rather than administrative, boundaries. This "river-basin" approach necessitates effective joint bodies in the case of transboundary waters, complemented by ratification of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health.

60. Frameworks for regional and subregional cooperation on water and sanitation, for example the Arctic Council, the Baltic 21 network, the European Union's Water Framework Directive or the recent initiative on "Environment, water and security in Central Asia" are important for addressing common issues, harmonizing standards and monitoring, where appropriate.

61. As well as ensuring proper planning and working in cooperation with neighbouring countries, Governments can: update and effectively enforce health standards and legal and regulatory frameworks, with meaningful disincentives and fines for violations and discharges; improve public participation in planning and decision-making, including the formation of user groups; undertake policy reforms that are pro-poor and take account of gender; and improve monitoring and data collection on water quality, mobilizing new water sources and improving degraded ones through integrated water resource management.

62. The decentralization of some responsibilities and decision-making to the local level and the creation of conditions to encourage private sector investment can improve service delivery and resource management, complemented by strengthened local and corporate governance.

63. Training and information improves institutional capacity at all levels for planning, managing and monitoring resources and services, as well as managing relationships and defining roles between the public and the private sector. Developed countries in the ECE region can help other countries, both in the region and globally, through providing finance and demand-led capacity-building and cooperation in knowledge, governance and technology, including through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

64. The finance gap can be filled by: implementing user- and polluter- pays principles, coupled with special attention for the most vulnerable members of society; eliminating perverse subsidies; offering credit guarantees and revolving credit funds to improve infrastructure; compensation schemes for water-linked environmental services; prioritizing water and sanitation in development and poverty reduction strategies; involving private sector, international institutions and other international partners, including through partnerships with stakeholder involvement and accountability, based on clear rules and responsibilities. Such partnerships can be public-public and/or public-private, covering both service delivery and resource management.

65. Raising awareness of hygienic behaviour and potential health risks encourages households to invest in improved sanitation and water supply.

66. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the European Union, together with the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, launched a partnership to implement the 2015 targets on water supply and sanitation and the 2005 target on integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans. This partnership was adopted at Kyiv, at the fifth Ministerial Conference, "Environment for Europe".

67. More sustainable consumption and production of water can be pursued through a variety of regulatory, economic and voluntary instruments.

## C. Interlinkages, cross-cutting issues and global context

68. The Forum highlighted important linkages between the three thematic sectors, including common obstacles, and good practices that can assist progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and the targets set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The region has problems of its own, for example, in achieving the water and sanitation targets in the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries, but also needs to work closely with developing country partners to tackle the more extreme difficulties which many face.

69. Provision of drinking water and sanitation requires multisectoral, interdisciplinary approaches that recognize the interdependence of these and other sectors. Lack of access to water and sanitation, inadequate shelter and communicable and water-borne diseases need to be tackled in an integrated way, backed by awareness-raising and wider support at regional, national and international levels. Environmental causes of human health problems like these require greater attention.

70. There are clear links between water, sanitation, human settlements, gender equality, targets set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals. Water is central to realizing goals such as food security and, together with sanitation, some of the health goals, as well as protecting natural resources. Water and sanitation, and infrastructure such as housing, transport and energy support the delivery of health and education services. Better management of water resources, access to housing, safe water and basic sanitation with hygiene promotion are key contributions to poverty reduction.

71. The most prominent obstacles to achieving agreed targets are inadequate financing and inadequate governance. Countries in the ECE as well as other regions need to honour their commitments from the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Declaration on Financing for Development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization if real progress is to be made.

72. Increased volume and effectiveness of official development assistance are essential, not least because such funding can build capacity for effective governance and natural resource management. But providing access to water, sanitation, energy and shelter requires private investments too. The attraction of new and additional financial resources is crucial. This means mobilizing domestic capital from within countries as well as attracting private sector investments from world markets through innovative mechanisms such as revolving funds, a proposed international finance facility and public-private partnerships. Financing needs to be complemented by other means of implementation, including capacity-building through cooperation in areas of technology and knowledge.

73. One target requiring attention at the twelfth session of the Commission is the adoption of sustainable development strategies by all countries by 2005. These strategies provide an overarching approach to interlinkages among many themes and cross-cutting issues and improve coherence between decisions made and actions

taken in these areas. It is essential that all stakeholders have an opportunity to participate in their preparation.

74. For countries with economies in transition and developing countries, such strategies can be formulated as poverty reduction strategies that integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. It is important that the dialogue concerning country-owned poverty reduction strategies address the targets for water, sanitation and human settlements, as well as issues such as gender equality, employment and workers' rights in order to help achieve the targets concerned while ensuring that development will be of lasting benefit.

75. Most countries in the ECE region have already adopted comprehensive strategies for sustainable development or are in the process of doing so. Review and reporting mechanisms at a high political level and the use of national targets and indicators are needed to ensure the success of such strategies. Subregional strategies have also been adopted, for example by the European Union and the Nordic countries.

76. Protecting the natural resource base is a fundamental cross-cutting issue. In developing national sustainable development strategies and other environment-related strategies, it is essential to use an ecosystem approach to the management of water, sanitation and human settlements. Protecting ecosystems is fundamental to water security and human livelihoods. Environmental aspects will be addressed at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Ministerial Environment Forum, to be held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 29 to 31 March 2004.

77. Sustainable consumption and production requires a range of voluntary, market-based and regulatory instruments, not only at a local but also at the national, regional and international levels. It is important to apply a life cycle perspective to changing production processes and at the same time to enable consumers to make informed and ethical choices. ECE member States should take a leading role in maintaining the momentum of the Marrakesh Process on this topic.

78. Issues such as efficient use of all resources and increased cost recovery should be addressed while ensuring that the poor have access to basic services. Local authorities, which are responsible for management of services at local and community levels, must be used as resources, and access to credit must be made available at the local level. Local capacity-building in the areas of governance, public-private partnerships and credit access should be prioritized. For review sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it would be useful to have regional gap analyses of capacity-building needs in the areas under discussion.

79. There is no one model of good governance, but its key elements are transparency, accountability, clear institutional responsibilities, private sector and civil society participation, environmental and social assessment and providing the poor with access. Appropriate corporate social and environmental responsibility and accountability are also essential for sustainable development.

80. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, bringing together the business community and civil society, can also play a fundamental role in promoting sustainable development, and they represent a key complement to the activities undertaken by the wider international community. In this respect, we welcome the organization of

the International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development (March 2004) by the Government of Italy.

81. Education can make a significant contribution to sustainable development, particularly towards poverty eradication and more sustainable consumption. This should be given significant attention at the twelfth session of the Commission, with a view to highlighting models such as the ECE region-wide strategy on the issue.

82. There is an important gender equality dimension to the issues of water, sanitation and human settlements that needs to be given due attention at the Commission on Sustainable Development. Gender equality analysis to establish how women and men are affected differently is required so that it can be addressed in implementation processes.

83. Reliable data and information are crucial to allowing policy makers to make informed decisions. Data from water quality and quantity monitoring networks should be translated into policy-relevant information for water management. Cadastres and land registration systems are important elements on which to build a functioning real property market. In addition, the combined use of cadastres and geographic information systems (GIS) is increasingly useful in disaster-prone areas. To ensure the policy-relevance of information, it is important that further work be done in developing and applying a comprehensive set of indicators for sustainable development.

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## Contribution of regional meetings in Latin America and the Caribbean to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

*Summary*

Three regional meetings have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean to debate and analyse the situation of human settlements, water and sanitation in the region in order to contribute to the deliberations of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on these three thematic issues. Summaries of the outcomes of the three meetings are given in the present document.

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# I. Introduction

1. Three regional meetings have been held in Latin America and the Caribbean to debate and to analyse the situation of human settlements, water and sanitation in the region in order to contribute to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Taking into account the fact that the Commission will now function on the basis of two-year "implementation cycles", including review and policy years, the Regional Implementation Meeting in Latin America and the Caribbean is planned for 2004, in preparation for the Commission's policy year (2005), to address possible measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome obstacles and constraints. Summaries of the outcomes of the three meetings are given below.

# II. Joint meeting of the XII General Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector of Latin America and the Caribbean Countries and the VIII Ibero-American Forum of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector

2. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Economic Development of Bolivia, Mr. Javier Nogales Iturri, and attended by representatives of 11 countries of the region, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and organizations of the United Nations system.

3. According to the report entitled "Impact of the deceleration of economic growth on urban development and housing: human settlements and basic services, land and housing exclusion", the sustainability agenda has gradually exerted an influence on institutions, public policies and management practices of the countries of the region. Progress in this field has been marked by the introduction of an institutional and social platform better than that which existed 10 years ago at the time of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. In addition, the concept of sustainable development has been incorporated into education programmes and the change in the social perception of environmental problems has strengthened public awareness and commitment.

4. Despite such positive achievements, sustainability is still not an integral part of the development process. The main bottlenecks in this area are of an institutional and financial nature, and have led to the perception of environmental sustainability as a cost rather than an opportunity. For this reason, a change of attitude with regard to the development of a new agenda to strengthen the relationship between environmental sustainability and economic development is indispensable.

5. On the other hand, it is recognized that the spatial specificity of environmental management requires the establishment of solid operative links with local authorities. The solution of high-priority environmental problems, including management of water resources and solid waste and sustainable land use and urban management, demands the decentralization of environmental policies and instruments as well as a more balanced distribution both of the public and private expenses at the national and local levels. It is at the local level that the commitment

between the State and citizens take shape, which explains the importance of strengthening local agreements on the agenda of sustainability, in particular focusing on developing local versions of Agenda 21. Such agendas could be powerful instruments for the channelling of new resources for the promotion of environmental sustainability at the national and subnational levels.

6. The main challenges faced by the region in implementing human settlements commitments and targets were presented, including: insufficient financing for housing and urban services; availability of land; weak institutional framework; and lack of environmental awareness in both the private and public sectors. The Forum adopted the La Paz Declaration,[1] in which the Ministers reaffirmed the goals and commitments agreed to at the Millennium Summit towards poverty eradication, specifically in the area of human settlements, by eliminating inequality in access and legal security of land holding as well as housing and urban services, reducing the region's vulnerability to natural disasters and adopting an integrated management of water resources. The Declaration recognizes that the analysis of the principal social, economic and environmental issues as well as the challenges to, and opportunities for, sustainable development in the region prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean identifies regional priorities in the area of human settlements. The adoption of the Declaration signalled that the Latin American and Caribbean region preparatory process for the twelfth session of the Commission enjoys the support of these authorities. The report of the meeting is available online.[2]

## III. International seminar on the analysis of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

7. The seminar, which was co-organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Government of Spain, was held at the headquarters of the Commission in Santiago on 17 and 18 November 2003. Representatives of countries of the region, a member of the bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development from Latin America and the Caribbean and representatives of the United Nations system, subregional organizations and NGOs attended the meeting. The seminar took stock of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in terms of their implications for the region, covering a range of issues related to energy, freshwater and biodiversity. Regional features and challenges were also identified for discussion at the twelfth session of the Commission in April 2004.

8. The first session of the seminar was dedicated to an evaluation of the results of the Johannesburg Summit. The seminar noted that the Platform for Action agreed upon at the Latin American and Caribbean Preparatory Conference for the Johannesburg Summit, as an element of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, was adopted by a regional political consensus on sustainable development issues and was, at the same time, the starting point for the elaboration of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development. The Santiago seminar highlighted how the Latin American and Caribbean regional perspective on sustainable development was reflected in the Rio de Janeiro Platform for Action and in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, where regional initiatives had been given extensive recognition.

9. The issue of financing for environmentally sustainable development of the region was examined. The increasing importance of this topic has been reflected in three recent global summits and conferences: the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Financing for development is one of the main themes and challenges for the developing world, and one of the most prominent on the regional agenda, owing to the fact that one of the main unresolved problems in Latin America and the Caribbean is how to guarantee a permanent and stable flow of resources for the application of development policies, including those for sustainable development. Efforts in the region to identify sources of financing, as well as how to link the issue of financing for development to sustainable development strategies, were discussed in detail.

10. At the session dedicated to biodiversity, the goal established in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the difficulty in bringing about its achievement was discussed. In spite of the difficulties in achieving such a specific goal, it was nevertheless considered to be a positive result of the World Summit, given the outstanding political relevance of the issue. In addition, taking into account the rich biodiversity of the Latin American and Caribbean region, the seminar highlighted the importance given in the Johannesburg Plan to the distribution of the benefits generated by biotechnology to local communities and pointed out the need to establish new linkages and promote existing synergies among the different multilateral environmental and sustainable development agreements.

11. At the session dedicated to the issue of energy for sustainable development, attention was focused on the impetus that Latin America and the Caribbean, together with Europe, have given to the development of renewable energy and its potential. In this regard, the political results of the regional conference held in Brasilia in October 2003, preparatory to the International Conference for Renewable Energies, to be held in Bonn in 2004, were discussed. Among the results underlined was the commitment of the countries of the region to establish a quantitative goal of attaining a certain proportion of renewable energy in the total primary supply of energy of each country in the region.

12. At the session dedicated to water resources, the importance of the linkage between national strategies for development and integrated water resources management was underscored. In this regard, actions for the more efficient use of resources in environmental, social, and economic terms are required. The seminar also considered the need for cooperative management of transboundary water resources and called for attention to the issue of freshwater supply in small island developing States of the region (in particular, certain countries of the Caribbean) and the importance of linking the results of the Johannesburg Summit to the review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States being undertaken during 2004.

13. Throughout the seminar, the importance of identifying a regional perspective on the sustainable development process was pointed out. At the Rio Conference in 1992, there was a consensus that in facing sustainability challenges, countries should "think globally and act locally". The Johannesburg Summit took a step forward ahead in demonstrating that the bridge between thinking globally and acting globally is regional coordination. Moreover, the Johannesburg Plan of Action reinforced the role that the regional organizations, including the United Nations

regional commissions, play in promoting sustainable development at the regional level.

14. A CD-ROM, which includes the presentations and other resources presented at the seminar, can be accessed on the Internet.[3]

# IV. Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

15. The objective of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Panama City from 20 to 25 November 2003, was to develop a strategy and priority lines of action (i.e., access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization; water resources; human settlements, vulnerability and land-use planning; renewable energies; trade and environment; economic instruments and fiscal policy; climate change; and environmental indicators) based on the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development, which was approved at an extraordinary meeting of the Forum of Ministers held within the framework of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

16. The Forum of Ministers of Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean was attended by 27 government delegations from countries of the region and from six observer countries. In addition, 29 international, regional and subregional organizations and NGOs attended the meeting.

## Decisions of the Forum of relevance to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

17. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Forum adopted the Regional Plan of Action for the 2004-2005 biennium and stressed the need to implement the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development, recognizing that the Regional Plan of Action is a fundamental tool for the gradual implementation of the Initiative.

### Water resources

18. In view of the fact that in the ministerial statements at the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development priority was given to the topic of water during the 2004-2005 biennium and that the World Summit on Sustainable Development reaffirmed the target in the Millennium Development Goals to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who do not have sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation, the Forum decided to make the theme of water and access to water resources a priority for the Latin American and Caribbean region for the 2004-2005 biennium

19. The Forum, noting that the Latin American and the Caribbean region contains one third of the planet's water resources, which makes water the region's most valuable natural resource, and recognizing that some countries are facing declining water resources and have problems in water distribution, especially in the small island developing States, decided to reaffirm the above-mentioned target of the Millennium Development Goals by promoting initiatives for integrated management of water resources through the concept of watershed management by all the member

countries of the Forum in order to increase national and regional capacities, including a guarantee of the active participation of all stakeholders, in particular through the creation of watershed councils or local management bodies and workshops. The Forum also decided to adopt friendly and accessible technologies that will foster sound water use and sanitation, thereby preventing water loss and pollution.

20. The Forum further decided on the adoption of integrated planning approaches, taking into account the linkages between land use, watershed and coastal zone management, especially for the small island developing States of the Caribbean.

**Health and environment**

21. The Forum, considering that the theme of environment and health is an integrated and vital part of sustainable development and that it was included in the eight priority areas of the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development and highlighted in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, decided to continue providing support to key regional and subregional mechanisms, with the participation of all the countries that are members of the Forum, and to encourage collaboration among all the countries of the region.

22. The report of the Fourteenth Meeting, containing all of its deliberations and decisions, including those of relevance to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, are available on the Internet.[4]

*Notes*

[1] http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/La%20Paz%20Declaration%20Minurvi%20ing.pdf.

[2] http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/Informe%20Foro%20MINURIV%202003%20ing.Pdf.

[3] http://www.eclac.cl/ddsah.

[4] http://www.pnuma.org/panama.

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## Regional Implementation Forum of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

## I. Introduction

1. The Regional Implementation Forum, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), was held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo, from 19 to 21 October 2003, back-to-back with the fourth session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR). The Joint Committee is composed of representatives from ESCWA, the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), the Department for Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for Western Asia (UNEP/ROWA).

2. Fifty participants from 14 Governments, joined by representatives from intergovernmental and academic organizations, industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), attended the Forum.

3. The Forum aimed at providing input on the thematic focus of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, namely: (a) water; (b) sanitation; and (c) human settlements.

## II. Review of overall activities

4. Delegates met in plenary sessions to review reports on follow-up activities to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of the Arab Environment Programme. Delegates also considered a proposal that CAMRE produce a work programme on the environment for the period up to 2005. The renewal of the

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Executive Committee of the JCEDAR was discussed and proposals regarding incentives to the private sector to invest in the field of environment were considered. The idea of establishing an Arab fund for environmental projects was also discussed.

## A. Activities related to the Regional Implementation Forum

### 1. Preparations for the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development: reports on the state of implementation in the Arab region: water, sanitation and human settlements

5. The General Assembly of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region reviewed memorandums and clarifications on preparations for the twelfth session of the Commission submitted by the technical secretariat of CAMRE and members of Joint Committee in charge of follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development.

6. Arab experts, assigned to prepare three reports on the state of implementation on water, sanitation and human settlements in the region, reviewed their reports, in which they identified obstacles and challenges and proposed visions for enhancing the executive programmes.

### 2. Report on the state of implementation of goals and commitments on water

7. Recalling the relevant commitments contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the expert's report noted main constraints to their achievement in the Arab region, including: poor governance; weak legislative and institutional frameworks; and lack of public awareness. The report also stressed the need for strategies for shared river basins and a holistic approach to planning and implementation. Achievements regarding the integrated management of water resources in the region were also mentioned in the report, including: the establishment of effective national institutional frameworks; the adoption of national water plans; the improvement of irrigation systems; and the cooperation in shared river basins. Concerning water resources assessment, the report stressed the creation of monitoring networks and databases in several countries. For the protection of aquatic ecosystems, it highlighted measures to: address pollution and increased salinity; treat and reuse wastewater; and harvest water. The report underscored the need for sufficient funds, training and credible information and recommended: establishing an Arab fund to finance, prepare and implement water development projects; draw up a regional programme for education, training and awareness-raising; and create water monitoring and regional information networks.

### 3. Report on the state of implementation of goals and commitments on sanitation

8. The expert's report described the dire sanitation situation in the Arab world and identified actions to improve it, including: increasing participation of civil society and the role of women; encouraging recycling practices; and applying the "polluter pays" principle. The report stressed the problem of poor solid waste management and described the benefits of privatization and the adoption of environment-friendly practices. The report also noted aggravating factors of pollution in over-populated cities, including: lack of awareness; poor segregation of regular and hazardous solid waste; lack of recycling; and inadequate maintenance of sanitation networks. The report recommended making use of local workforces and

technology for better and more affordable maintenance of sanitation networks, as well as establishing a central authority and developing Arab standards for sanitation.

## 4. Report on the state of implementation of goals and commitments on human settlements

9. The expert's report stated that achievements pertaining to improving the life of the rural and urban poor should include: the development of national urban development programmes and plans to address spontaneous settlements; the setting-up of programmes securing land tenure and housing; partnerships for housing provision; strategies to combat rural poverty; and support for entrepreneurial building activities. The report also stressed the need to balance privatization and the role of the State; understand spontaneous settlements as an economic phenomenon; reform quality control of the housing stock; rationalize housing costs; and orient cities towards the knowledge-based economy. Regarding the provision of adequate environmental structures, the report highlighted efforts to: develop integrated environmental legislative and institutional frameworks; build awareness; promote renewable energies; and address transport-related air pollution. Recommendations included: expanding the role of the private sector in providing municipal services; developing environmental monitoring and data-management systems; decentralizing environmental management; and adopting land use and zoning legislation. Regarding planning and managing sustainable human settlements, the report stressed the need to develop national land use and population distribution strategies, including the creation of new cities, as well as the design of institutional frameworks for environmental safety.

## 5. Institutional framework for sustainable development

10. ESCWA's series of innovative, appropriate, comprehensive, gradual and culturally sensitive recommendations for sustainable development governance focused on: (a) strengthening institutional arrangements; (b) improving operational mechanisms; and (c) adopting regional approaches to sustainable development governance. The study explained how a narrow concept in the Arab region has led to failure to involve those who have an impact on sustainable development. Regarding the institutional aspect, the study underscored a high level of centralization in the Arab world and stressed the need to include, at both national and regional levels, the concept of sustainable development as it emanated from the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The study also stated that the low level of civil society participation in the region was due to a patriarchal mentality, a strong resistance to creating new bodies and the priority given to individual over community interests. The study noted the success of the Tunisian sustainable development model and recommended that it be studied and reproduced. At the national level, the study suggested: the creation of a high council for sustainable development (including various ministries); a national council for sustainable development (including NGO and civil society representatives); and the appointment of a sustainable development adviser to the Prime Minister. The study underscored that its proposal was presented as a practical model for Arab countries that could readily make use of existing national institutions, political realities, and the current cultural context. Thus, the recommendation in the study was not intended as an ideal, permanent structure, but rather a transitional institution, giving non-governmental stakeholders an important but indirect role.

11. As a result, the delegates hailed efforts exerted by ESCWA in the above-mentioned study and requested the integration of comments made by member

countries during the Forum. The delegates further proposed that CAMRE expand its objectives and mandate to include aspects of sustainable development, as well as to expand its technical secretariat to include UNEP/ROWA and the secretariats of ESCWA and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

### 6. Follow-up to the transformation of the 2001 Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of the Arab Environment Programme into applicable programmes and activities

12. Follow-up measures to the 2001 Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of the Arab Environment Programme, highlighting projects on the coastal environment, land degradation and marine and freshwater water resources, were introduced. However, it was stated that funding for these projects remained an issue, and suggestions were made that JCEDAR propose the convening of a meeting to further the realization of projects in this field. In turn, the delegates agreed to convene workshops on integrated water resources management, desertification, land degradation and integrated coastal areas and marine resources management to: (a) complete the preparation of projects in these areas; (b) identify implementation priorities; and (c) mobilize potential donors to finance feasibility studies.

### 7. Incentives to promote private sector investment in the field of the environment

13. Lebanon, supported by Syria, stressed the role of the private sector in environmental protection, and presented a proposal to be included on the agenda of CAMRE. Suggestions were also made to convene a workshop to further study the role of the private sector and identify relevant actions, prior to discussing the issue at a higher level. As a result, JCEDAR assigned the secretariat to follow up the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development by communicating with the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Arab countries and by organizing a workshop on private sector incentives to encourage investment in the field of the environment.

### 8. Consideration of an Arab fund for environmental projects

14. Lebanon, supported by Syria, proposed the creation of an Arab fund for environmental projects. Also, noting the need to reduce reliance on foreign aid, Egypt recommended developing a regional market for environmental goods and services. As a result, JCEDAR assigned to the secretariat the task of organizing roundtable discussions on the possibility of establishing an Arab fund to finance environmental projects.

## III. Summary of the outcome of the Regional Implementation Forum

15. Participants adopted decisions on: follow-up measures to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region (which was launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development); follow-up activities to the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of the Arab Environment Programme (2001); incentives to the private sector to invest in environmental projects; and the establishment of an Arab environment fund.